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BUSH SAYS MILITARY COURTS BEST SOLUTION FOR GUANTANAMO DETAINEES

Highlights Prime Minister al-Maliki's plans for Iraq in press conference

By Anita Wadhwani
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush said he would like to close the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where enemy combatants from the War on Terror are being held, but the United States first needs a plan for conducting legal proceedings for the prisoners, some of whom he called "very dangerous."

Speaking June 14 to reporters at the White House, Bush said, "I'd like to close Guantanamo. But I also recognize that -- that we're holding some people that are darn dangerous and that we better have a plan to deal with them in our courts."

The president said he believes military courts will offer the best solution, and his administration is waiting for the U.S. Supreme Court to decide the issue. Many of the detainees, he added, already have been repatriated to their home countries.

"Eventually these people will have trials, and they will have counsel, and they will be represented in the court of law," he added.

The president said that the detention facility provides an "excuse" to some countries to argue that the United

States is “not upholding the values” that it is trying to encourage in other countries.

“[M]y answer to them is, is that we are a nation of laws and rule of law. These people have been picked up off the battlefield and they’re very dangerous. And so we have that balance between customary justice, the typical system, and one that will be done in the military courts. And that’s what we’re waiting for,” Bush said.

For additional information, see Detainee Issues:
http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights/detainees.html

IRAQ

The president also spoke about his recent surprise visit to Iraq where he met with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. “I saw firsthand the strength of his character and his deep determination to succeed, to build a country that can sustain itself, govern itself and defend itself,” Bush said.

Bush said he was “impressed” by the members of the Maliki government, and praised the prime minister’s plan for moving the nation forward, including current security activities known as Operation Together Forward.

He said the operation is an effort to “restore security and rule of law to high-risk areas in the capital city,” and will be carried out by approximately 26,000 Iraqi soldiers, 23,000 Iraqi police, as well as 7,200 members of the coalition forces. “Iraqi troops will increase the number of checkpoints, enforce a curfew, and implement a strict weapons ban across the Iraqi capital,” Bush said.

The president plans to direct the Treasury Department to help the Iraqi government create a stable public finance system. Bush also said he will have Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman provide additional support to Iraq.

Bush added that Prime Minister al-Maliki’s intent to bring Iraq’s militias and other armed groups under government control is progressing. Members of these militias will be integrated into the security forces, he said.

The transcript of the president’s remarks is available on the White House Web site:
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060614.html>

U.N. HARIRI ASSASSINATION PROBE ENCOURAGING, U.S. ENVOY SAYS

U.N. Ambassador Bolton says Syria’s cooperation still questionable

By Judy Aita
 Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- The United States is pleased with the progress of the U.N. investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and will support the investigators’ request to expand the scope of the probe and extend its mandate for one year, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said June 14.

However, Syria’s cooperation with the investigation remains questionable, Bolton told journalists outside the U.N. Security Council chambers.

Serge Brammertz, head of the International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC), said in a written report to the council on June 9 that in the past three months Syria has “formally complied with nearly all” of UNIIC’s requests, some of which dated back to November 2005. The documents and other information Syria has provided, he said, are being reviewed for their relevance to the investigation.

“Despite these encouraging steps,” Brammertz said, “it is important to note that the commission will ultimately judge cooperation of the Syrian authorities on the merits of the information provided and the promptness with which its requests are being accommodated.”

UNIIC is preparing additional requests related to Syria’s presence in Lebanon and Hariri’s assassination, he added.

In his report, “Brammertz does not say that Syria has fully cooperated,” the U.S. ambassador pointed out, quoting from the report that Syria’s cooperation was “generally satisfactory.”

“Maybe in a pass/fail system that is a pass for this reporting period, but that is hardly a ringing endorsement,” Bolton said.

“I take the report at its worth that there has been satisfactory cooperation [from Syria] in this period, but far from the full active cooperation that the Security Council has required,” the ambassador said.

Brammertz met with the Security Council in open and closed sessions June 14 to discuss the progress of the investigation.

Brammertz said that UNIIIC's systematic forensic examinations have determined that Hariri was killed by an aboveground explosion of a "large improvised explosive device" with a minimum of 1,200 kilograms of TNT equivalent. The device was placed in a Mitsubishi truck and detonated "by an individual within or immediately in front of the Mitsubishi" as the former prime minister's convoy passed. There is also no evidence that the man claiming responsibility in a video sent to news organizations, Ahmed Abus Adass, was the suicide bomber, said the head of the investigation commission.

Brammertz indicated that, given the large amount of explosives, the crime must be considered a targeted assassination. "The magnitude of the explosion was designed to ensure success of the operation even if the Hariri vehicle was not directly hit," he said.

UNIIIC is developing a working hypothesis on who commissioned the crime and the motive behind it. According to Brammertz, it could involve politics, personal vendettas or finances.

Investigators are convinced, Brammertz said, that "strong structures," not individuals, are behind the assassination.

The commission is also providing technical assistance to Lebanon on 14 other attacks since October 2004 to help further those investigations and establish potential links between the attacks, he said.

Brammertz has asked the Security Council to extend UNIIIC's mandate for one year and let the investigators provide more technical and forensics expertise to Lebanon on the 14 investigations.

Bolton said UNIIIC's report "shows the continuing progress and professionalism of the investigation." The commission, he said, "shows encouraging signs of moving ahead in a variety of areas."

A draft resolution currently circulating in the council will back Brammertz' request to extend the life of his commission and its mandate, the ambassador said.

Brammertz' request for the year extension and his willingness to remain on the job "shows me that preparations

are proceeding in a very methodical fashion," Bolton said.

What the latest report -- UNIIIC's fourth -- demonstrates, Bolton said, "is the systematic progression toward the preparation for trial, toward the selection of defendants, and the preparation of cases."

U.S. PLEDGES \$2 MILLION FOR SOUTH OSSETIA ECONOMIC REHABILITATION

Total of \$12.5 million pledged at European donors' conference in Belgium

Washington – The United States has pledged \$2 million for confidence-building measures and economic rehabilitation in Georgia's South Ossetia region, the State Department announced June 14.

The pledge came during an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) donors' conference in Brussels, Belgium, in which participating states pledged more than 10 million euros (approximately \$12.5 million) in economic assistance. (See related article.)

South Ossetia, an autonomous political subdivision of Georgia during the Soviet era, declared independence within the Soviet Union in September 1990. Georgia strongly opposed the move. Open warfare began in January 1991 and continued until June 1992, when Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian representatives negotiated a cease-fire agreement (See State Department fact sheet on South Ossetian conflict.)

The United States seeks a political settlement that would allow South Ossetia significant autonomy within a unified Georgia.

"Today's OSCE donors' conference in Brussels for Georgia's South Ossetia region marked an important step toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict within Georgia's internationally-recognized borders," the State Department said in a June 14 media note.

"We welcome the solidarity of the international community in reaffirming its support for Georgia's territorial integrity," the State Department said.

The OSCE said the donors' conference in Brussels was the first of its kind and that the donations would be used to support a package of projects agreed on by all parties.

According to the OSCE, the pledges included: the European Commission (2 million euros), the United States (2 million U.S. dollars), Sweden (1 million euros), Belgium (1 million euros), Germany (500,000 euros), the Netherlands (500,000 euros), Norway (about 250,000 euros), Spain (200,000 euros) and Finland (200,000 euros). Estonia, Turkey, France, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, Italy, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Poland and Andorra pledged amounts up to 150,000 euros.

For more on U.S. policy in the region, see Caucasus: http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/eurasia_caucasus.html

RICE PLEDGES COMMITMENT TO LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY

Secretary of state says free peoples create a more stable world

By Michael Jay Friedman
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pledges the United States will remain engaged in the world and would ground its foreign policy in the nation's founding ideals of liberty and democracy.

Speaking June 14 at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, she said that by striving to offer other peoples a chance to flourish in freedom, America contributes to a safer, more stable world.

The secretary addressed a number of foreign policy themes, including the desirability of an active foreign policy and whether supporting freedom advances the "realist" objectives of regional and global stability.

The fundamental choice facing the United States is "Will we lead in the world or will we withdraw?" she said. Abandoning the defense of "liberty and democracy in our world" ultimately would risk the nation's safety, she

said, adding, "[W]henever freedom and tolerance are on the march, we are secure. But when these ideals are in retreat we are vulnerable.

"If America does not ... rally other nations to fight intolerance and to support peace and to defend freedom, and to help give all hope who suffer oppression, then our world will drift toward tragedy. The strong will do what they please. The weak will suffer most of all and inevitably, inevitably, sooner or later the threats of our world will strike once again at the very heart of our nation," Rice said.

The secretary offered several examples of U.S. leadership. "If not for America, who would rally other nations to conscience to the international defense of religious liberty?" The Bush administration has its closest ties with governments that respect their people's beliefs, she said. "Government simply has no right to stand between the individual and the Almighty."

She posed the same question about the "horrific international crime of human trafficking," where the United States "has launched a new abolitionist movement," and the global fights against HIV/AIDS, which she called "one of the great moral causes of the 21st century."

In Sudan, U.S. diplomacy helped end the civil war between North and South and assumed a lead role in achieving the recent Darfur agreements. The United States is providing nearly all the food aid being sent to the people of Darfur, Rice said.

The secretary said individual Americans, organized through their religious and other philanthropic organizations, "multiply the compassion of our government." She cited Southern Baptists who fed the hungry and sheltered the homeless after the Indonesian tsunami and after hurricanes Katrina and Rita and who help in poor nations to build critical infrastructure like dams and wells.

American leadership in cultivating freedom and democracy was also essential to combat terrorism, Rice said. "We're striking at the very source of terror itself by summoning a vision of hope that outshines any ideology of hatred. The United States is supporting the democratic aspirations of all people, regardless of their culture or their race or their religion."

The secretary pledged to bring terrorists to justice. "The terrorist [Abu Musab al-] Zarqawi ... will never harm,

he will never murder, he will never terrorize innocent people again. That is what America stands for.”

Rice distinguished between American leadership and American exceptionalism. Although the United States embodies the liberties of self-government, freedom of thought and freedom of worship, it neither owns those liberties nor defines the means of expressing them. Democratic nations build democratic institutions that reflect their own cultures and customs, she said.

Echoing a theme expressed by the influential Cold War-era Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the secretary said, “America will lead the cause of freedom in our world, not because we think ourselves perfect. To the contrary, we cherish democracy and champion its ideals because we know ourselves to be imperfect.”

The Southern Baptist Convention, with about 16 million adherents, is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

A transcript of the secretary’s remarks is available on the State Department’s Web site:

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/67896.htm>

Pleases Note: Most texts and transcript mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage: <http://geneva.usmission.gov/>

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